

Inspection of The Prince of Wales School

Maiden Castle Road, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 2HH

Inspection dates:	3 and 4 June 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Kindness ripples through this happy school. Nurturing relationships lie at the centre of this. Pupils appreciate the adults who care for them. They know who they can talk to if they have any worries. An inclusive culture ensures that everyone is welcome. Difference is valued and celebrated. As a result, pupils feel safe, supported and attend well.

Pupils behave exceptionally well. They embrace the school's behaviour themes through meaningful characters. For example, 'Raya', the respectful butterfly, helps pupils learn how to be considerate of others. 'Reggie', the resilient tortoise, supports pupils to overcome difficulties and try their best.

High expectations and an ambitious curriculum 'inspire' pupils to learn. The school base every decision on what is best for the pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Most pupils live up to these expectations and achieve well.

The school takes every opportunity to provide rich experiences to develop the whole child. Pupils actively participate in a wide range of clubs such as gardening, art, woodwork and basketball. Older pupils perform Shakespearean plays in a local theatre. Trips to London, where pupils visit the Houses of Parliament, help pupils to gain a better understanding of democracy. This broadens pupils' horizons.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has identified the crucial knowledge pupils need from the early years to Year 4. In the main, pupils revisit important concepts and embed them over time. For example, in science, children in the early years understand the scientific process involved in the melting of ice with salt or warm water. Year 1 pupils learn about different materials. In Year 4, pupils build on this and develop their understanding of states of matter.

Children get off to an exceptional start in the early years. They learn routines and settle quickly. They work collaboratively to problem solve, showing impressive levels of concentration and perseverance. For example, when role playing in a 'doctor's surgery', children were able to sustain their learning for long periods.

The school places a sharp focus on reading. In the early years, children enjoy a wide range of stories, songs and rhymes. The school supports children to develop their language and communication well. As they move through the phonics scheme, pupils learn to read and write simple words and phrases. The phonics programme helps to ensure that most pupils learn to read quickly. Pupils who need extra help get the support they need to keep up and catch up with the pace of the phonics programme. Specialist staff use British Sign Language to support pupils with hearing impairments. Most books match the sounds that pupils know. This helps pupils practise and build their fluency and confidence.

The school makes regular checks on how secure pupils' learning is. Teachers use a range of strategies, such as regular quizzes, to revisit previous learning. Innovative approaches like the 'collectable mastermind cards' help pupils remember key information and connect this to new learning. For example, in history, pupils can make links and comparisons between influential people like Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole. However, in a minority of subjects, the school does not use checks on learning with the same degree of skill. This means that sometimes, pupils develop gaps in their knowledge.

The school identifies pupils with SEND swiftly. It works closely with outside agencies to put strategies in place to meet these pupils' needs. Pupils who attend the specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (specially resourced provision) are supported to access their learning alongside their peers. Staff provide highly effective support to enable them to overcome any barriers to learning.

Pupils benefit from the 'therapeutic thinking' approach staff take to support and improve pupils' emotional well-being. Throughout the school, pupils behave well and treat others with respect. They show impeccable manners that shine throughout the school day.

The school has an exceptional offer for pupils' wider development. Pupil 'POW Passports' track pupils' meaningful and memorable experiences before they leave school. For example, pupils learn to play a musical instrument and spend a night in the school roundhouses, where they cook on an open fire. A link with a school in Kenya helps pupils to deepen their cultural understanding. Pupil leadership groups feel empowered to make improvements to the school. For example, the school council successfully lobbied for more playground equipment such as skateboards, space hoppers and a quidditch set. Members of the eco council help other pupils to 'reduce, reuse and recycle'. Pupils painted mini elephants to auction and raise money for a local charity. Such experiences support pupils to become responsible and thoughtful citizens.

Skilled governors provide appropriate support and challenge to the school. Staff feel supported and enjoy working at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a minority of subjects, the school does not identify pupils' gaps in knowledge quickly enough. When this happens, some pupils do not have secure foundations on which to build new learning. The school should ensure that assessment systems in these

subjects support staff to check how well pupils have learned the knowledge in the curriculum.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	113747
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10378893
Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	213
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Martin Butcher (co-chair of governors) Emma Brown (co-chair of governors)
Headteacher	Gary Spracklen
Website	www.princeofwales.dorset.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	20 and 21 March 2024, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school operates an eight-place specially resourced provision for pupils with a physical disability in the local authority. These pupils are fully integrated into the school.
- There is a pre-school provision for children aged two and above.
- The school provides a before- and after-school club.
- The school currently uses one unregistered and one registered alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form

provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed the ongoing impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector also met with representatives of the school's governing board and met with representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science and history. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also met with curriculum leaders and looked at pupils' work in other subjects.
- The lead inspector listened to some pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 reading to a familiar adult.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school, including at lunchtime. In addition, inspectors met with pupils to hear their views.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses. They also considered at responses to the staff and pupils surveys.

Inspection team

Gavin Summerfield, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Adam Matthews

Ofsted Inspector

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